

Task Force D Meeting Summary

Wednesday, July 12, 2006

Participants: Tom Bloomer – Burr Oaks Farm, Patty Cantrell – Michigan Land Use Institute, Mike Hamm – MI State University, Justin Rashid – American Spoon Foods (chair), Melinda Remer – Travel Michigan, Robin Rosenbaum – MI Department of Agriculture, Dennis West – Northern Initiatives.

Additional Participants: Getachew Abate – MSU Product Center, Soji Adelaja – MI State University, Rich Harlow – MI Department of Agriculture, Ken Nye – MI Farm Bureau.

The seventh Task Force D: Enhancing Agricultural Viability meeting convened Thursday, July 12, 2006 from 1:30 – 3:30 pm at MDA's Geagley Lab in East Lansing. Council Member Justin Rashid chaired the meeting.

Mr. Rashid called the meeting to order, welcomed task force participants, and reviewed the goals of the meeting, which included finalizing Recommendation D6: Farmland Preservation, and reviewing the work of the task forces and MFPC over the past year. Mr. Rashid began by reading the proposed draft of Rec. D6 and then opened the floor for discussion and feedback.

Task force participants discussed the specific numbers mentioned in the recommendation and debated the propriety of the numbers. There was agreement that the task force wanted to make a bold, yet politically feasible recommendation. The task force decided that increasing the community match requirement would be too onerous for smaller communities, so decided to leave the requirement at 25% (as it is currently under the Ag Preservation Fund guidelines) with incentives awarded for achieving a greater match. The task force then worked to reconcile the numbers of acres recommended for preservation with the dollars required to support such a program.

The task force debated the merits of identifying a specific source of funding for the program, and ultimately decided that further analysis needed to be done, and that the task force should simply identify some good options, such as the real estate transfer tax.

MFPC staff member Kristin Brooks explained that the goal of the next phase of this meeting was to give Task Force D participants an overview of the work of the council, and the work of the other three task forces. Ms. Brooks then presented to the task force participants information on the original executive order, and the goals contained therein. She explained how the recommendations from the council meet those goals and

reviewed a chart showing those relationships. She reviewed the recommendations from the other three task forces.

Ms. Brooks then reviewed the Task Force D recommendations. They are:

- Rec. D1: Role of MSU Extension
- Rec. D3: Increasing Michigan Agriculture Visibility
- Rec. D4: New Market Development
- Rec. D5: Expanding and Stabilizing the Farm Workforce
- Rec. D6: Farmland Preservation (DRAFT)

Ms. Brooks led a brief discussion of these five recommendations, and asked task force participants to rank the recommendations to help staff in determining the order in which they should be presented in the final report to the Governor.

Finally, Ms. Brooks explained to the task force participants that the future of the Council and Task Forces is still under discussion, but that there are important tasks the council and task forces can work on in the future and MFPC staff is working to develop a plan to accomplish them. She promised to keep task force participants updated on the progress of the final report and on its delivery to the Governor.

Ms. Brooks thanked the task force participants for their work and time, and asked task force participants to complete an evaluation to assist in planning for the future of the MFPC. This is the final meeting of Task Force D for this phase of the Michigan Food Policy Council.